## Even if it is allowed, why do it?

No one suggests that there is anything wrong with praying the individual prayers separately. *Zuhr* and *`Asr* prayers and *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* prayers can be offered either combined or separately. However, this practice of combining the two prayers by the Prophet (s) reflects the Divine Grace of Allah (swt) for the convenience of the *ummah*, and there are good reasons why it has become customary amongst the Shi'ah:

- People are often busy with their own affairs and have their own duties and anxieties, particularly in countries where the educational or work system is not structured to cater to the requirements for Muslims to offer their daily prayers. Some professions require long hours of continuous, uninterrupted work. Hence, for convenience, and in order to avoid missing the second of the two prayers, the Shi'ah offer their two prayers in one interval, whether early or late, during the appointed time.

- Where people gather from far and wide to offer one of the two prayers and since it is permissible to combine them, they offer the two prayers one after another in congregation. This way they have both fufilled their obligations as well as participated in the congregation *(jama'ah)* prayers thus gaining the increased reward. Consider the example of Friday prayers. We observe that thousands of Sunni bretheren offer their Friday prayers on time but many of them fail to offer the *`Asr* prayers at all, let alone in congregation. On the other hand a Shi'i Muslim who offers Friday prayers will invariably perform the *`Asr* prayer in congregation.

- The fact that this *sunnah* is not generally adopted by our Sunni brothers is another reason why the Shi'ah feel they must keep it alive. We would like our children and other Muslims and the posterity to know that the practice of combining the *Zuhr* and *`Asr*, and the *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* prayers is permissible as well as from the *sunnah* (established practice) of the Holy Prophet (s).

## Conclusion:

Combining *Zuhr* and *`Asr* prayers, and *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* prayers, is in accordance with the Qur'an and permissible according to the *sunnah* of Prophet (s), besides being more convenient. The fact that this well-evidenced *sunnah* is not generally practiced by our Sunni brothers does not make it inapplicable in our lives. As the famous Sunni commentator of Sahih Muslim, al-Nawawi, writes:

*When a practice (Sunnah) is confirmed authentic, it is not abandoned just because some, most or all people abandon it.*
[al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut, 1392 A.H.), vol. 8, p. 56]

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*“Undertake the prayer at the time of the declining sun to the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; for indeed the morning recitation is witnessed”*
(Qur'an: Chapter 17, Verse 78)

# Why do the Shi'ah Combine Prayers?

The Shi'ah acknowledge the five obligatory daily prayers. However, they frequently combine the *Zuhr* and *'Asr* prayers by offering them consecutively during the time period defined by the start of *Zuhr* and the end of *'Asr*. They also consider it permissible to combine the *Maghrib* and *'Isha* prayers in a similar manner. This practice is in complete agreement with the Qur'an as well as authentic traditions from the Prophet (s).

The Sunni schools of law (*fiqh*) - with the exception of the Hanafi school - allow the combining of the obligatory prayers *(al-jam` bayn al-salatayn)* in the case of rain, travel, fear, or other emergencies. The Hanafi school of law prohibits the combination of the daily prayers at any time, with the exception of the prayers at *Al-Muzdalifa* during the Hajj. The Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools of law all agree on the permissibility of combining the prayers when one is travelling, but have differences of opinion on other reasons. The Shi'ah Ja'fari school of law states that one can combine the prayers without *any* particular reason.

## Prayer timings according to the Qur'an

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, the famous Sunni commentator on the Qur'an, wrote regarding the verse quoted (Chapter 17, Verse 78) :

- "If we interpret the darkness (*ghasaq*) as being the time when darkness first appears then the term *ghasaq* refers to the beginning of *Maghrib*. On this basis, three timings are mentioned in the verse: 'the time of noon, the time of the beginning of *Maghrib* and the time of *Fajr*'. This requires that noon be the time of *Zuhr* and *`Asr*, this time is shared between these two prayers. The time of the beginning of *Maghrib* is the time for *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* so this time is also shared between these two prayers. This requires allowing the combining between *Zuhr* and *`Asr* and between *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* at all times. However, there is proof to indicate that combining whilst at home without any excuse is not allowed. This leads to the view that the combining be allowed when travelling or when there is rain etc."
  [Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 5, p. 428]

We will shortly point out irrefutable evidence that combining prayers without any excuse is perfectly valid. However, it is clear that the *times* of the obligatory prayers are only three: 1) The time of the two obligatory prayers, *Zuhr* (noon) and *`Asr* (afternoon), which is shared between the two. 2) The time of the two obligatory prayers *Maghrib* (dusk) and *'Isha'* (night) which is also shared between the two. 3) The time for the *Fajr* (morning) prayer which is specific to it.

## Did the Prophet (s) combine prayers?

- Ibn 'Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed in Medina seven (rak'ahs) and eight (rak'ahs), i. e. (combined) the noon (*Zuhr*) and afternoon (*`Asr*) prayers (eight rak'ahs) and the dusk (*Maghrib*) and night (*'Isha'*) prayers (seven rak'ahs).
  [*Sahih al-Bukhari* (English translation), volume 1, book 10, number 537; *Sahih Muslim* (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 *Combination of prayers when one is resident*, hadith no. 1522]

- 'Abdullah b. Shaqiq reported: Ibn 'Abbas one day addressed us in the afternoon (after the afternoon prayer) till the sun disappeared and the stars appeared, and the people began to say: Prayer, prayer. A person from Banu Tamim came there. He neither slackened nor turned away, but (continued crying): Prayer, prayer. Ibn 'Abbas said: "May you be deprived of your mother, do you teach me Sunnah?" And then he said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) combining the noon (*Zuhr*) and afternoon (*`Asr*) prayers and the dusk (*Maghrib*) and night (*'Isha'*) prayers." 'Abdullah b. Shaqiq said: "Some doubt was created in my mind about it. So I came to Abu Huraira and asked him (about it) and he testified to his assertion."
  [*Sahih Muslim* (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 *Combination of prayers when one is resident*, hadith no. 1523, 1524]

## But wasn't that due to travel, fear, or rain?

Many traditions from the Prophet (s) clearly indicate that he used to combine prayers *without* any particular reason.

- The Prophet (s) prayed in Madinah, while residing there, ***not travelling***, seven and eight (this is an indication to the seven Raka't of *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* combined, and the eight Raka't of *Zuhr* and *`Asr* combined).
  [Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, page 221]

- The Prophet (s) prayed *Zuhr* and *`Asr* in combination and *Maghrib* and *'Isha'* in combination ***without a reason for fear or travel***.
  [Malik ibn Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, vol. 1, page 161]

Indeed, we are even told in some traditions about the rationality behind this practice of the Prophet (s). **It was for the convenience of the *ummah*!**

- Ibn 'Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah (s) combined the noon prayer with the afternoon prayer and the sunset prayer with the *'Isha'* prayer in Medina ***without being in a state of danger or rainfall***. And in the hadith transmitted by Waki' (the words are): "I said to Ibn 'Abbas: What prompted him to do that? He said: **So that his (Prophet's) Ummah should not be put to (unnecessary) hardship.**"
  [*Sahih Muslim* (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 *Combination of prayers when one is resident*, hadith no. 1520; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, vol. 1, p. 26]

- The Messenger of Allah (s) observed the noon and afternoon prayers together in Medina ***without being in a state of fear or in a state of journey***. Abu Zubair said: "I asked Sa'id (one of the narrators) why he did that. He said: I asked Ibn 'Abbas as you have asked me, and he replied that **he (the Holy Prophet) wanted that no one among his Ummah should be put to (unnecessary) hardship.**"
  [*Sahih Muslim*, English translation, Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 *Combination of prayers when one is resident*, hadith no. 1516]